

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

Two flea beetles feeding on *Solanum crispum*—The Chilean potato vine, *Solanum crispum* Ruiz & Pav., is widely grown in gardens as a climbing shrub for walls or pergolas. On 19.viii.97 a plant growing against the west-facing wall of a building at the Royal Horticultural Society's Garden, Wisley, Surrey was seen to be infested with adult flea beetles. They had peppered the foliage with small round holes, especially on the lower part of the plant. This form of damage is typical of adult flea beetles. Two species of flea beetle were present, *Psylliodes affinis* (Paykull) and *Epitrix pubescens* (Koch) (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae). Both are known to feed on plants in the Solanaceae family and *P. affinis* has the common name of potato flea beetle. Fowler (1890) gives woody nightshade, *Solanum dulcamara* L. as the host plant for *E. pubescens*, with this plant and other unspecified Solanaceae for *P. affinis*. Joy (1932) gives *S. dulcamara* and black nightshade, *S. nigrum* L. for *E. pubescens* but lists no host plants for *P. affinis*, although he does refer to it as the potato flea beetle. *P. affinis* is an occasional pest of potato foliage and is of widespread occurrence.—A. J. HALSTEAD, RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB.

REFERENCES

- Fowler, W. W. 1890. *The Coleoptera of the British Isles*, Volume 4. Lovell Reeve, London.
Joy, N. H. 1932. *A practical handbook of British beetles*, Volume 1. H. F. & G. Witherby, London (reprinted 1976, E. W. Classey, Faringdon).

Delayed mating in trio of *Conops quadrifasciatus* Deg. (Diptera: Conopidae) and the functional male theca.—In June 1996 I observed two male *Conops quadrifasciatus* mounted side-by-side on the back of the thorax of a female on a ragwort flower on a rural road bank at Welwyn, Hertfordshire. The flies were unusually passive and were not mating, perhaps because the sun went in and a thundery shower was imminent. I cut the flowering stem, gently stood it in the darkness of my car boot, and drove home. The flies were still undisturbed, so I took photographs. Three hours later, I noticed one of the males copulating with the female (Plate I, Fig. 2).

The photograph clearly shows that the male clasps the apex of the female's abdomen between his small theca and his genitalia. The female's much larger theca, used to clasp a host when ovipositing, is not involved. British keys to *Conops* are confusing to the beginner because they fail to mention the existence of a male theca and how to tell the sexes apart, and figure only female abdomens.

In both sexes the thecal swelling is beneath segment 5. In the female tergites 6 and 7 are clearly articulated, whilst the male has but one bulbous sclerite, though there may be a basal setose zone and a sharply defined apical zone of different surface vestiture. In both sexes there follows an incurved structure bearing the anus on its outer surface. The male genitalia or female ovipositor are entirely concealed beneath this terminal structure.—R. W. J. UFFEN, 4 Mardley Avenue, Welwyn, Herts AL6 0UD.